

APPENDIX C

Casework Procedures and Core Practice Issues

The “Casework Procedures and Core Practice Issues” contain more detailed information about procedures, concepts, and practices referenced in specific sections of the Foster Care manual. Included in this “Casework Procedures and Core Practice Issues” are procedures, practice tools and general knowledge, many of which are applicable to the range of behaviors and activities foster care staff engage in while working with children and their families. The procedures included in this section will help the practitioner carry out specific policy requirements consistent with the law or regulation to which it applies. To support the practice information provided in this guidance, references to resources such as books, internet sites and VISSTA courses are provided.

Companion Guidance to Section 4: “Residential Placement”

Selecting a Residential Placement for the Child

The primary step in selecting an appropriate residential placement for a child is to compare the child’s needs with the services offered by the residential facility. The service worker should involve the child and parent(s) or prior custodian in determining the appropriateness of the residential placement for the child.

Priority shall be given to facilities that provide services to return children to the community.

Factors to consider in determining the appropriate facility should include:

- Diagnosis and treatment of child;
- Accessibility of placement to parents or prior custodians;
- The child’s and family’s readiness for placement and treatment;
- Opportunity for parental/family involvement and participation in the treatment plan;
- Ability of facility to sustain placement;
- Duration of treatment;
- Cost and funding resources; and
- Transition plan to return the child to parent/community.

The agency coordinates the placement with the local school board to assure that the child’s educational needs are met.

Preparing the Child and Family for Placement

The child and parents should be made fully aware of the reasons for and expectations of the residential placement.

- The child should be prepared for the placement. A pre-placement visit to the facility should be arranged to afford the child the opportunity to see the physical facility and meet the staff and peers with whom the child will be residing. An explanation should be given to the child as to why the placement is occurring and how it is anticipated that services provided will help meet the child's needs.
- To prepare the family, the agency should discuss with them how services provided at the residential facility will meet the needs of the child and the family's role in meeting the child's needs through visitation, counseling and/or therapy, as well as participation in the transition plan for the child's return.

Companion Guidance to "Section 5: Case Opening"

Senate Bill (SB) 1006, as passed by the 2005 General Assembly, supports the continuous school attendance of children in foster care by requiring local departments of social services (LDSS) and licensed child-placing agencies (LCPAs) to enroll children in school immediately upon their placement in foster care. Agencies affected by this legislation include LDSS and LCPAs that have legal custody of children in foster care.

Provisions of Senate Bill 1006

The new law provides that all children placed in foster care (with the exception of those placed through a non-custodial foster care agreement), or moved from one foster care placement to another, receive continuous education through specific enrollment requirements including:

- Immediate enrollment in school of a child placed in foster care, whether or not all required documents are available. Immediate enrollment means either within 72 hours or by the end of the next day the school is open;
- Provision of all required enrollment documents within 30 days of enrollment (birth certificate, comprehensive pre-school physical examination, social security number, and proof of immunizations);
- At the time of enrollment, provision of a written statement by the custodial agent enrolling the child stating to the best of the person's knowledge: 1) the child's age; 2) whether the child has or has not been expelled from school attendance at a private or public school division of the Commonwealth or in another state for an offense in violation of school board policies relating to weapons, alcohol or drugs, or for the willful infliction of injury to another person; and 3) that the child is in good health and free from communicable and contagious diseases;
- Provision of a written statement to the principal of the school regarding the child's foster care placement and status of parental rights; and
- Provision of a written statement to the superintendent of the relevant school division, or his designee, of the placement.

Additionally, a child placed in foster care or moved from one foster care placement to another may be allowed to continue to attend the school in which he was enrolled prior to placement (or the change in placement). Allowing the child to remain in the previous school is a joint decision made by the involved school districts and the agency with legal custody. If it is in the best interest of the child whose placement is outside his current school district to remain in his current school, the agency with legal custody should explore all options for providing for the child's transportation from the new foster care placement to the previous school. Bus tokens, foster parents transporting the child, Comprehensive Services Act (CSA) and/or local school district funding for transportation are examples of creative methods to enable the child to remain in his school.

LDSS and LCPAs need to communicate with their local school districts and understand school policy regarding such things as:

- Attendance at school when a child has a contagious disease (e.g., fever, cold);
- How to enroll a child during summer months; and
- The availability and requirements for special programs for the child.

LDSS and LCPAs with legal custody should also communicate to school personnel foster care requirements such as regular court dates, the child's service plan, and the concept of permanency planning.

In accordance with the Code of Virginia, LDSS and LCPAs should also:

- When a LDSS or LCPA is aware a child has or may have a contagious disease, the child must be enrolled as required, but attendance should be in accordance with school policy;
- Work with the schools in considering whether it is in the best interests of the child to remain in the school attended prior to the foster care placement (or the change in placement). Considerations of whether or not it is in the best interest of the child to remain in the previous school include:
 - The child's desires;
 - Opinions of the parent and/or caregiver;
 - Travel distance and time that would be spent on travel;
 - Maintaining the child's social and community connections;
 - Likelihood of returning home in a timely manner;
 - Availability of programs able to meet the child's identified needs; and
 - What time of year it is (i.e., end of the school year, the summer, etc.).

The information required at the time of enrollment is:

- Birth certificate (§22.1-3.1.A of the Code of Virginia (Code))
- Social Security Number (§22.1-260.C of the Code)
- Proof of immunization (§22.1-271.2 of the Code); and
- Physical examination (§22.1-270 of the Code).

Provisions of House Bill 95/Senate Bill 656

- Local departments and licensed child-placing agencies are encouraged to communicate with their local school districts to provide information regarding any rehabilitative efforts made or completed by the child or youth to prevent the occurrence of any further offenses.

VDSS has developed two model forms (“Expedited Enrollment of Children Placed in Foster Care” and “Notice of Student Receiving Foster Care Services”) to assist LDSS and LCPA staff in providing to the local school districts the written documentation required. If localities choose to use other forms, they must include all of the information in the model forms. These forms can be accessed at www.localagency.dss.state.va.us/divisions/dfs/fc/forms.cgi and are available in Appendix A of this manual.

Because implementation of this bill is a joint effort between local departments of social services and local school jurisdictions, the Department of Education Superintendent’s memorandum issued to local school divisions related to this legislation is available at www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2005/ as a June 2005 issuance.

Companion Guidance to “Section 6: Initial Assessment”

ASSESSING THE CHILD'S AND FAMILY'S SERVICE NEEDS

The assessment process is the basis for sound case management. It is through the use of the assessment process that the service worker gathers accurate, relevant information concerning the child and family's situation. This information is used to determine a baseline for the child and family's strengths and needs, the services and resources required, the responsibilities of the parents, the child, the social service department and the foster or pre-adoptive parent, and the criteria for evaluating future needs of the child and family.

Assessment is an ongoing process that begins with the first contact with the child and family. In CPS cases, this initial contact is made by the Child Protective Services worker. Regardless of who makes the initial contact, the assessment process does not end until the case is closed. Reassessment is accomplished through monitoring of the service plan and evaluation of the effectiveness of the services and resources that are made available to the child and family.

Both the initial and reassessments are used to guide the service worker in the development of an appropriate service plan. Information gathered in the course of assessment should be used to identify specific services the child and family need in order to correct the conditions that led to the child's placement in foster care.

SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS THAT ENCOURAGE ASSESSMENT

1. Appear genuine and trustworthy

Trust is an essential element of any successful relationship, including those between child welfare workers and their clients. One way of demonstrating trustworthiness is to actually do

the things you commit to doing, particularly things done on the family's behalf or that they believe will be helpful to them. For instance, if you offer transportation then do not cancel it. The permanency worker should "communicate interest in the family and in understanding things from their perspective. A willingness to listen and to learn from the family can help the worker identify areas of commonality and also communicates respect for the family's strengths and uniqueness. During the early stages of the relationship, workers should do a lot of listening" (Rycus & Hughes, 1998, p. 249).

2. Always be honest and direct

It is difficult to trust someone who selectively shares information or who is perceived as dishonest or misleading. It is your ethical duty to ALWAYS be honest with family members ' about the status of their case, the nature of your concerns, the assessment of their progress, the requirements they must meet, and plans that involve them and their children. Many conversations may potentially be difficult, but family members tend to react better to honesty than partial truth.

3. Avoid unexamined assumptions

"The caseworker should never assume what the family means, nor assume that the family understands the worker's intentions" (Rycus & Hughes, 1998, p. 249)." It is critical that workers honestly and directly check out their assumptions with family members and ask for clarification of what the family has said or what their behavior means. It is also critical that workers check out whether family members have accurately understood what the worker has said to the family. Having family members tell you what they heard you – the worker – say is a good way to discover if you are all "on the same page."

4. Approach in a manner consistent with the family's cultural background

It is crucial that the child welfare worker understand the general cultural traditions and expectations of the different populations he/she serves. Behaviors that appear benign to the worker may be perceived as offensive or discomforting by the members of particular cultures. When dealing with unfamiliar cultures, seek the advice of "cultural consultants" from the community and explore the culture in books and other materials found in your local department, other service agencies, the internet or the library.

5. Actively look for Strengths in the family

It is important to identify strengths as well as challenges in order to better understand families and to find resources to use within the family. Look for strengths and you will find them. Point strengths out so the family can find them.

6. Understand that resistance is normal

"In child protection, initial resistance by family members is normal and expected. The unrequested intrusion into their lives by a stranger vested with considerable authority, or, who challenges their parenting capability and their rights to retain their children, is almost always experienced as a threat, regardless of how well-intentioned the worker" (Rycus & Hughes, 1998, p. 242). It is difficult to be cooperative when a worker appears at your door and tells you how to raise your children. Most people would probably balk at the worker's suggestions or be offended and angered by the intrusion into their lives. This natural tendency to be protective and uneasy might easily be labeled as "resistant" or "unmotivated." It is important to accept and acknowledge that resistance to worker efforts to be helpful, or some of worker expectations, is not always evidence that parents do not want to provide care for their children or even make changes in their parenting behaviors. Change is scary and uncomfortable. Resistance and

anxiety are normal reactions that can be dealt with by offering understanding, support, and reasonable flexibility.

7. Be a fair critic and a great coach and cheerleader

During the assessment process, the permanency worker not only gathers important information but also "provides guidance, support, encouragement, and reinforcement for efforts toward positive change, and gives constructive feedback that guides family members in trying new strategies and solutions. "Every effort is made to empower family members to generate their own solutions through their active participation in the development and implementation of the activities in the case plan "(Rycus & Hughes, 1998, p. 229)

Field Guide to Child Welfare, Volumes I-IV; Judith S. Rycus and Ronald C. Hughes
Publishing Date: 1998

Adapted from VISSTA Course CWS3000: FC New Worker Policy Training w/SACWIS Pilot
Version Section II: Trainer's Guide to Activities June, 2005

TOOLS FOR USE IN ASSESSMENT:

The following tools are often used by social workers to gather information from family members and other individuals in order to gather a comprehensive picture of the family. These tools are designed to be helpful in the assessment process but are not the actual assessment itself. Genograms and ecomaps in particular should be used after discussion with and training from others experienced in their use.

1. Genogram: The genogram was first developed and popularized in clinical settings by Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson. The genogram (pronounced: *jen-uh-gram*) lets the worker and family members quickly identify and understand patterns in the family history. The genogram is a tool that helps map out relationships and traits in the family. There are a lot of books on this topic as well as many websites. Genograms can vary significantly and are only limited by your imagination. Most genograms include basic information about number of families, number of children of each family, birth order, and deaths. Some genograms also include information on disorders running in the family such as alcoholism, depression, diseases, alliances, and living situations. Basic Genogram components can be accessed at www.genopro.com/genogram_components/default.htm.
2. Eco-maps: An Ecomap is a pictorial representation of a family's connections to persons and/or systems in their environment. It can illustrate 3 separate dimensions for each connection: 1. The STRENGTH of the connection (Weak; tenuous/uncertain; Strong) 2. The IMPACT of the connection (none; draining resources or energy; providing resources or energy) and 3. The QUALITY of the connection (Stressful; Not stressful). As with genograms, there are many books that discuss the purpose and use of ecomaps including social work textbooks on assessment. The internet and public library are additional sources for information on ecomaps.
The purpose of an ecomap is to support classification of family needs and decision making about potential interventions. Further, it is to create shared awareness (between a family and their social workers) of the family's significant connections, and the constructive or destructive influences those connections may be having. Ecomaps enable a structured, consistent process for gathering specific, valuable information

related to the current state of a family or individual being assessed. They support the engagement of the family in a dialogue that can build rapport and buy-in, while heightening the awareness of the caseworker and family. Ecomaps are used to:

- Identify and illustrate strengths that can be built upon and weaknesses that can be addressed
- Summarize complex data and information into a visual, easy to see and understand format to support understanding and planning.
- Illustrate the nature of connectedness and the impact of interactions in pre-defined “domain” areas, - whether those connections and interactions are helping or hurting the family. Part of this value is in supporting the concept of observing “resource and energy flow” to and from a family as a result of its connections and interactions with its environment.
- Provide a consistent base of information to inform and support intervention decisions
- Allow objective evaluation of progress – workers can observe impact of interventions, both on the family and on other elements of their environment
- Support discussion of spiritual and value related issues in a constructive way.
- Help support integration of the concept of family assessment as an ongoing process.
- Integrate the values and concepts – and the real power of System Theory in a practical way.
- Force the building of interviewing and other skills for staff.
- Support effective presentation of families issues for court

www.ohiocla.com/Year%205%20Revisions/ecomap1.htm

3. Timelines: are another assessment tool that depicts the development and history of an individual and or family along a continuum from birth to the present. Similar to genograms and ecomaps, it is a graphic representation of patterns, traits, and the chronology of events in the life of the individual and/or family.

Companion Guidance to “Section 8: Preparing the Service Plan”

INTRODUCTION

The goal of case management in foster care is to provide services that will lead to the child's placement in a permanent situation. The service plan is the document that describes needs of the child and family, and identifies the services that will be provided to meet these needs so that the goal can be achieved.

Because of the shortened time frames, mandated by both federal and state law, it is important that workers convey to parents the urgency in working with the agency in developing and following through on the requirements of the service plan. Parents will need to be informed of the limited amount of time they have to improve the situation that brought their child into care. Parents must also be fully informed of any concurrent permanency plan developed for their child (ren) including the purpose of concurrent permanency planning, the alternate goal developed, and the time frames involved (see Foster Care Policy Manual Section 9.1.6)

Integrating the Service Planning Process and the FAPT (Foster Care Policy Manual Section 8.2)

When a child in foster care placement is also being staffed by the Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT), every effort should be made to integrate the process of developing the Foster Care Service Plan, the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), and the Individualized Education Program (IEP), when appropriate, to streamline the planning process and ensure that all plans are consistent. When the FAPT staffs a foster care case, the service worker should incorporate FAPT recommendations into the Foster Care Service Plan or Foster Care Service Plan Review.

When the FAPT is involved in service planning, and a team member other than the local department service worker is designated case manager, the team and the case manager are responsible for ensuring compliance with federal and state service plan and review requirements. The local department service worker is expected to provide assistance, as necessary, to the team and case manager in meeting the compliance obligations. When there is a concurrent permanency goal for a child and family, the local department service worker must ensure that the concurrent goal and related service needs are documented in the service plan and that everyone involved in the case is aware of the purpose of the concurrent permanency plan. Local workers need to work with the FAPT staff to attempt to staff cases and approve services prior to court hearings.

Who Should be Involved in the Service Plan (Foster Care Policy Manual Section 8.4)

Parents have the right to participate fully in every meeting and discussion of their child's case by the local department and are considered to be members of the team. As such, they must receive adequate notice of the meetings and be informed that they have the right to present information from their perspective. Every effort should be made to meet at a time and location that enables parental attendance.

As a team member, parents should be actively included in identifying:

- Their child's and family's strengths;
- Their child's and family's service needs and considerations for how they think those needs could best be met; and
- Areas where their child and family have made progress or not, regarding the service plan goals and objectives.

Children who are old enough (generally age 12) and/or of sufficient maturity should be invited to participate in meetings and service planning involving their case. Decisions made at service planning meetings should be made "through the eyes of the child." Children have no control over the decisions that are made for them by adults but these decisions have significant impact on their lives. The more agencies can empower children by including them in the decision-making process, the better those agencies serve them.

Foster parents, resource parents, relative care givers and pre-adoptive parents have the most current and complete knowledge of the child's adjustment in foster care. They play a vital role in the planning and decision-making regarding the child's future. They should always be strongly urged to attend and participate fully in the case planning meetings.

By providing services to children and/or their families, community resource providers may have information essential to planning and decision-making. It is crucial to involve them in the

planning and review process. The child's teachers and/or guidance counselors should be included in this process.

Likewise, the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for the child can bring a different perspective to the service planning process. GAL's and CASA's are charged to investigate the facts of the case and determine the needs of the child, as well as the resources available within the family and community to meet those needs. The Guardian ad Litem makes recommendations to the Court on behalf of the child. It is better to resolve differences in recommendations in the service planning meeting prior to court hearings. It is critically important for all members of the child's team to work closely together in a collaborative effort on behalf of the child's best interests.

SERVICE PLANNING PRACTICES

To develop the initial service plan, workers should:

1. Consider all aspects identified in the Child Protective Services Safety and Risk assessment;
2. Engage the child and family in the service planning process. This includes consideration of such things as meeting with the family at times that are conducive to their schedule; altering locations for the meeting to allow families to attend; providing transportation when transportation is the only barrier to attendance.
3. Utilize and apply knowledge of child development including things such as children's sense of time, cognitive and emotional development, etc.; Social workers need to be able to distinguish between normal age-appropriate behaviors, and those behaviors that indicate an unmet developmental need. Since the physical, emotional, and physiological aspects of the child's development are so interrelated, delays in one aspect often affect subsequent development in other areas. Since some of the most crucial developmental milestones occur early in the child's life, early deprivation of appropriate stimuli and nurturance has the potential for severe long-term effects. Grief, separation and loss and attachment issues are of primary concern when considering the needs of a child removed from his family and placed in foster care.
4. Identify the need for additional assessments (mental health, developmental, substance abuse, etc.) for the child and other family members;
5. Develop an individualized plan for the family directly related to their identified needs and strengths;
6. Include all relevant parties in the service plan including but not limited to; significant others of the parent, supportive family members, individuals identified by the parent and child as supportive influences in their lives, other caregivers including previous and current resource, foster and preadoptive parents and that includes goals and objectives that are measurable and applicable to the individual family members behaviors that must change or needs that must be met.
7. Prioritize service needs identified in the assessment. If the assessment reveals many parenting deficits and the need for numerous services to ensure the safety and well-being of the child, the service needs should be prioritized so as not to overwhelm the family system;
8. Link with and incorporate treatment plans of other providers into the service plan including the Individual Family_Services Plan, the Individual Educational Program, mental health providers assessments and treatment plans, substance abuse assessments, psychological evaluations, etc. The social worker should discuss the findings and recommendations of these reports with the child and/or family prior to developing the service plan to ensure they are aware of how these reports will influence the plan and what is expected from them.

9. Assess and establish an appropriate permanency goal and acknowledge those cases where a return home goal is not appropriate and move towards termination of parental rights;

Companion Guidance to "Section 10.6 Administrative Panel Reviews"

PREPARATION AND PLANNING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL REVIEWS

Panel Reviews are an administrative review mechanism and should be planned and prepared for with the same diligence as workers would for a court hearing. It is the social worker and administration of the local department that establishes an atmosphere that conveys the importance of the APR and sets the expectation for all involved. By thoroughly documenting the child and family's well being and progress, preparing written material well in advance of the meeting, extending invitations to participate thirty days in advance of the review, and facilitating the meeting in a manner that encourages active participation, the social worker creates a forum that promotes engagement of all parties.

Invitation letters to parents, previous caretakers, foster and pre-adoptive parents and any other individuals identified by the child or family as having a significant positive role in their lives must communicate information in understandable terms and in the family's primary language. Specifically, invitation letters should inform the invited party of the reason for the meeting and stress the local departments' desire to include those individuals as part of the team that is planning for the child.

Since it is critical that all individuals who are significantly connected to the life of the child are invited to the review, local department staff should make active and on-going efforts to encourage their attendance and participation. Telephone follow-up to the invited party after the invitation letter is sent to discuss the review and the reason their attendance is valuable is one simple step workers should make to further encourage involvement. Offers to assist in transportation, scheduling the review at times conducive to the family and other parties schedule and consideration of holding the meeting at a location that provides easier access for these members are additional best practices to facilitate involvement.

Companion Guidance to "Section 9.10 Working with Foster Parents and Providers" Creating Life Books

INTRODUCTION

Children in out-of-home placements often lose their connection with their life history. For younger children in particular, memories may dissipate with time and the recall of grandparents, aunts, family friends, pets and other connections may fade. Community connections with a pastor, teacher, neighbor may also be forgotten when the child is moved from his or her community. Stuffed animals, trinkets from carnivals, school awards, valentine cards and other such typical childhood mementoes seldom accompany a child into foster care.

For many people, family picture albums, scrap books, family movies and videos, birthday cards, year books, trophies and other types of mementoes are significant items that document history and experiences of life. Through these items, we maintain a connectedness with our experiences, identify, accomplishments and history.

Children in foster care can and should have a similar opportunity to stay connected with their identity. Life books help document children and youth's personal histories as they go through the foster care and adoption process. They also serve as a way for workers and foster/adoptive parents to connect with and understand the child's history and experiences. The process of developing the life book communicates to the child that the adults in the child's world are interested in his or her history, experiences, culture and family. It can serve as a tool to build new connections with the foster parent and the caseworker.

What is a life book?

A Life book is a scrapbook that contains photographs, drawings, anecdotes, stories about the child, his/her family and friends, and other memorabilia. The child can participate in developing the Life book and in dictating or writing his/her own contributions to the history.

How do I create a Life Book?

Life books may be created by the caseworker with the help of the foster or resource family or by the resource family, and with the help of the child whenever possible. Either way, caseworkers will have to help gather information for a Life book. Previous foster parents or relatives are often eager to help, and can assume most of the responsibility for gathering contents and compiling the scrapbook. There are many sources of valuable information:

- Biological parents and other relatives often have pictures of the child. Families are often willing to provide pictures, if the purpose is explained, and if they are assured that the pictures will always be in the child's possession. If they have only original prints, photo shops can make copies, and the originals can then be returned to the family members.
- Family members can contribute pictures of themselves. This should include parents, siblings, extended family, family friends, and others who have been important to the child. Children should be asked who they remember or who is important to them and those individuals should be contacted to obtain pictures or stories from these individuals about the child.
- The worker can approach previous foster parents or caregivers; they may have many pictures of the child in their own family albums. They can provide negatives or extra photos, or copies can be made from prints or slides. Workers may find photos documenting a child's first tooth, first steps, birthday parties, and other family events. Photos of previous foster families should also be obtained.
- The worker, and when possible with the foster parents, can return with the child to previous schools, neighborhoods, and communities, and together they can photograph people and places familiar to the child. The worker can also obtain class pictures from the school, and school pictures from the school photographer.
- The worker can call the hospital where the child was born; inquire whether infant photos were taken, and contact the photography department to obtain the negative or a reprint. Footprints and other documentation may also be available. The hospital building can be photographed also.
- The worker can ask relatives and previous caregivers for examples of the child's drawings and artwork.
- Workers can encourage current caregivers to document what appear to be unimportant daily events. These current events will one day be the child's history, and this documentation will be of particular importance if the child leaves their home.

What is the child's role in creating the Life Book?

Children should be involved in creating the life book whenever possible. They should be actively involved and not passive "recipients" of the life book. Children and youth should pick out their own Life Book format, colors, etc. Children's input into whom and what they would like to put into the life book should also be solicited. Children may have very different ideas about what they see as important in their lives and their perceptions and wishes must be honored. Workers and foster parents should introduce ideas the child has not considered but should not force these ideas on the child.

Children should also be allowed to compile their Life Book in whatever fashion they choose. The format and lay out should be in line with the child's perceptions and preferences.

Adults will need to help children understand the life book in the child's terms. Adults who have scrapbooks of their own might share these with children to help them understand what life books mean and the importance it has for them in their life.

Sometimes children destroy or lose things that we want them to keep – like a life book. How do I empower the child to be in control of his or her life book while ensuring that this does not happen?

Foster parents and /or social workers should, whenever possible, keep extra copies of the information and items that are placed into the Life Book. While not everything that is collected may be duplicated, as much as possible should be in order to allow for any replacements. Children should know that such duplicates are being kept and that these duplicates are to ensure that if something were to happen to their Life Book, they would be able to re-create it with the duplicate items.

ADAPTED FROM:

Rycus, J.S., & Hughes, R.C. (1998). *Field guide to child welfare: Placement and permanence* (Vol. 4, pp. 757-759). Washington, DC: CWLA Press; Columbus, OH: Institute for Human Services.

ADDITIONAL LIFE BOOK RESOURCES

My Foster Care Journey & Life books: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child, both written by Beth O'Malley
Adoption-Works
440 Revere Street
Winthrop, MA 02152
800-469-9666
<http://www.adoptionlifebooks.com>

Foster Children's Life Books: A Caseworker's Handbook
The Center for Child & Family Studies
College of Social Work, University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
803-777-9408

<http://www.sc.edu/ccfs>

Foster Children's Life Books:**A Caseworker's Handbook, My Life Book**

The Center for Child & Family Studies

College of Social Work, University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC 29208

803-777-9408; FAX: 803-777-1366

\$30.00

Find current product, contact, and pricing information for the *Life Book* and *Life Book Caseworker Handbook* at www.sc.edu/ccfs.

Working with Children and Families Separated by Incarceration:**A Handbook for Child Welfare Agencies (2000)**

Lois Wright, Cynthia B. Seymour

Child Welfare League of America

440 First Street, NW, Third Floor

Washington, DC 20001-2085

202-638-4004; FAX: 202-638-4004

\$18.95

Find current product, contact, and pricing information at www.cwla.org.

Because ... Somebody Loves Me (1999)

Bruce Hershfield

Dottie Ward-Wimmer

Child Welfare League of America

440 First Street, NW, Third Floor

Washington, DC 20001-2085

202-638-4004; FAX: 202-638-4004

\$3.95

Find current product, contact, and pricing information at www.cwla.org.

In Focus: Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Early Brain Development (2001)

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families

1250 Maryland Avenue, SW, Eighth Floor

Washington, DC 20024

800-394-3366 or 703-385-7565; FAX: 703-385-3206

Retrieve directly from www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/focus/earlybrain/index.cfm

Seasons of Grief Catalog of Grief Resources

Centering Corporation

7230 Maple Street

Omaha, NE 68134

402-553-1200

Free of charge from Catalog Request Center — order or download from

www.centeringcorp.com/myCatalog/index.html or, retrieve directly from www.centeringcorp.com/myCatalog/2005Catalogv2.pdf (2005-2006 catalog currently available).

Searching for Relatives

Relative Placements

Relative placement promotes timely reunification, and placement stability, as children placed with relatives experience fewer placement disruptions than children placed with non-related foster parents. Preserving the child's existing connections and relationships to familiar adults is achieved with relative placements. In many instances, relative placement preserves the continuity of care, relationships, culture and environment that are essential to a child's overall well-being. Relative placement maintains the family system as day-to-day decisions continue to be made by adults that the child already knows and understands to be their family. The child continues to participate in family celebrations, traditions, vacations and activities. (*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 2001-2004 Children and Family Service Review Findings*)

Relative placements facilitate the development of positive self-image, self-esteem, identity, and consequently, may help children to avoid the double jeopardy of feeling abandoned by both parents and family. Children placed in relative care continue to feel a sense of belonging, worth, history and value to others. (*Excerpts from Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care, Joseph Crumbley & Robert L. Little, (1997), Child Welfare League of America*)

Definition of Relative

Family members are the first placement consideration for children who are not able to live with their parents. Relative, as defined in the Code of Virginia §63.2-2200 means a spouse, child, father, mother, sibling, or other person who is related by blood, marriage or adoption. For an Indian child, relative includes member's of the extended family as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, shall be a person who has reached the age of eighteen and who is the Indian child's grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece or nephew, first or second cousin, or stepparent. (*Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, United States Code, Title 25, Chapter 21, Section 1903*)

Policy Requirements

- The responsible LDSS should conduct a relative search to ensure that relatives are given first consideration for placement of children who are not able to live with their parents. Placement with Relatives with subsequent transfer of custody is the second highest priority permanency goal in Virginia statute.
 - At each of the different types of court hearings concerning the child's health and safety, the court may consider placement of the child with a relative or other interested individual as an alternative to foster care. The court may also consider transferring temporary custody to a relative or other interested individual at the preliminary removal hearing or the dispositional hearing.
- If the court orders transfer of temporary custody to a relative or other interested individual, the order may provide for the initiation and completion of an investigation of the relative or other interested individual; and may require the local department of social services to continue supervision until disposition. The order may also provide for

compliance with any preliminary protective order and as appropriate, ongoing provision of social services to the child and temporary custodian.

- A thorough identification of extended family members should be completed with the parents and other sources. Relatives are assessed for their appropriateness to provide a temporary and a permanent home to the child. Interstate referrals should also be completed as soon as possible.

Conducting a Relative Search

The process of conducting a relative search may include the elements of gathering and documenting information, assessing the information, consulting and making a placement recommendation based on the best interests of the child. The local department of social services should document the reasons the specific family was selected. Best practice may include but is not limited to:

- Identification of maternal and paternal relatives as soon as the child enters foster care
- Consideration of relatives as potential caregivers any time the child enters foster care
- Consideration of relatives as caregivers when it is necessary for the child to move from the current foster home to a new foster home
- Consideration of relatives when the local department is no longer considering reunification as the permanency plan for the child, such as in the case of:
 - Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody
 - Adoption
 - Permanent foster care when appropriate.

While the child remains in foster care, the local department should review the appropriateness of renewing relative search efforts during the annual permanency planning hearings.

Reasonable and Comprehensive Efforts

The local department should make special efforts to recruit a foster family from among the child's relatives. Efforts that the local department can make may include but is not limited to:

- With the written consent of the parent or guardian for release of information about the child, or by order of the court, consulting with: (1) persons, other than those in the local department, providing services to the child or the child's family; and (2) other persons who know the child's family.
- Asking the child, the child's parents or guardians, and the child's Guardian ad Litem, who the child's relatives are, and preferences regarding which relatives should be considered for placement
- Contacting relatives and sharing only information necessary for them to consider possible placement and requesting names of other relatives
- Contacting immediate and extended family members
- Contacting maternal and paternal relatives including:
 - Grandparents
 - Aunts and uncles
 - Great grandparents
 - Great aunts and uncles
 - Adult siblings
- Contacting individuals who have a significant relationship with the child
- Contacting previous foster parents for the child

For children who have relatives that live out of state, begin the Interstate Compact on Placement of Children (ICPC) process as soon as the child enters foster care to ensure timely consideration of these relatives. A preliminary assessment should be conducted to determine if this is a fit and willing relative. This assessment includes the social worker contacting the relative directly to find out if they are interested in a relationship with the child and if there may be issues that would prevent the relative from meeting foster care approval standards.

Absent Parents

Identifying and notifying absent parents early in the process is important for children who are in foster care. Working with parents may lead to locating relatives who may become a placement resource or provide support for the family.

When a child is in out-of-home placement, the responsible LDSS should make diligent efforts to identify, locate and where appropriate, offer services to both parents of the child. If a non-custodial parent is willing and capable of providing for the day-to-day care of the child, the local department may seek authority from the custodial parent, or the court, to have that parent assume care of the child. The LDSS should also seek assistance in having the parent cooperate with paternity establishment as part of a service plan.

- Documenting efforts and consult with the city or county attorney's office
- Documenting when local department efforts are not possible (i.e., parent is deceased)
- Using resources, tools, such as
 - Phone book/online directory
 - Child support
 - www.zabasearch.com
 - [National Directory of Putative Father Registries](#)
 - Court records
 - Social service records
 - Birth certificate
 - Department of Corrections
 - U.S. military armed forces (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy)
 - DMV Records

Cultural Considerations in Identifying and Finding Relatives

The tradition of relative caring for children is part of all cultural, racial and socioeconomic communities. How kinship care is understood and experienced may vary from community to community, from family member to family member, and parent to parent. During the conversation with parent(s) about identifying and locating relatives, the worker should be mindful that culture is one of the lenses that we use to help us interpret, interact and respond to others and situations.

Culture is defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs and behaviors that members of society use to cope and interact with their world and with one another and that are transmitted from generation to generation from learning. Culture impacts our communication, the assumptions we make and our relationships. From the very beginning, the social worker needs to be knowledgeable of the family's culture and how that may affect the ability to effectively communicate and develop a relationship with them. After locating relatives, workers should be mindful of the role culture may play in relatives' perception of what the relative is being asked to do.

Workers should also be mindful of fully and openly discussing options, roles and responsibilities to help alleviate any misunderstandings between the relative and the worker. A relative may be interested in providing temporary care, however, decline initially out of respect for the parents. They may feel that by giving the parent more time the parent will be able to resolve the issues that brought their children into foster care on their own. Kinship care supports the transmission of a child's culture, ethnic and family identity and legacies, components vital to the child's psychological development and emotional integrity. (*Shondra Jackson, Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.*)

The following are some questions to consider when beginning a relative search:

- What are the roles, hierarchy and authority of relatives in the raising of children, in both the presence and absence of parents?
- What is the family's hierarchy of responsible relatives (e.g., godparents, grandparents, siblings) in the temporary or permanent absence of parents?
- Does the family practice or reject formal or informal placement of relative's children (e.g., adoption, guardianship)?
- How do gender and cultural traditions affect the family's decision-making structure, child-rearing practices and selection of a family spokesperson?
- What has been/is the family's experience and attitude towards social service professionals and institutions?
- How have environmental conditions or changes affected the family's socioeconomic stability, child-rearing practices and family members (e.g., unemployment, migration, housing, rural or urban settings, language)? (*Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care, Crumbley and Little, 1997*)

THE DILIGENT SEARCH CHECKLIST

This can be used as a guide to assist efforts in finding relatives and absent parents. The following is a list of resources:

- ☐ Parent, Guardian, or Prior Custodian
- ☐ CPS Staff
- ☐ Guardian ad litem, CASA
- ☐ Internet Search Engines
 - www.whitepages.com/14493/
 - www.whowhere.com
 - people.yahoo.com
 - www.people-search-global.com
 - www.usa-people-search.com
 - www.free-people-search-engines.com/
 - www.uslocate.com/
 - www.people-search-engines.com/
 - www.zabasearch.com
- ☐ Social Services Records
- ☐ SPIDeR
- ☐ Social Security Administration:
 - Death Index
 - Letter Forwarding
- ☐ Department of Motor Vehicles
- ☐ Child Support Enforcement
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ Prison Locator Services
 - www2.vipnet.org/cgi-bin/vadoc/doc.cgi
 - www.ancestorhunt.com/prison_search.htm
- ☐ Court Records:
- ☐ Homeless Shelters:
- ☐ Phone Directory
- ☐ Employment Records
- ☐ Military Information
 - Locators
 - Retirement Benefits
 - Letter Forwarding
- ☐ Veteran's Administration

The following form may be given to birth parents and prior custodians to assist with locating relatives and prospective placement options.

RELATIVES/FRIEND CONTACT INFORMATION

Mother's FULL Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Father's FULL Name: _____

Paternity Established ☐ Yes ☐ No

Address: _____

Phone: _____

The following persons are related to me, the other parent and/or my children:

MATERNAL RELATIVES (MOTHER)

MOTHER	FATHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
GRANDMOTHER	GRANDFATHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
SISTER	BROTHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
AUNT	UNCLE
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Legal Custodian or Other Interested Persons	Legal Custodian or Other Interested Persons
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):

PATERNAL RELATIVES (FATHER)

MOTHER	FATHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
GRANDMOTHER	GRANDFATHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
SISTER	BROTHER
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Email:	Email:
AUNT	UNCLE
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):
Legal Custodian or Other Interested Persons	Legal Custodian or Other Interested Persons
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone(s):	Phone(s):

The information listed is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand this information may be used in an attempt to identify a placement for my child(ren).

Printed Full Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____